

Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild

Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild, also called **villa Île-de-France**, is a French seaside villa located at Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat on the French Riviera.

The villa was designed by the French architect Aaron Messiah, and constructed between 1905 and 1912 by Baroness Béatrice de Rothschild (1864–1934).

A member of the Rothschild banking family and the wife of the banker Baron Maurice de Ephrussi, Béatrice de Rothschild built her rose-colored villa on a promontory on the isthmus of Cap Ferrat overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. The Baroness filled the mansion with antique furniture, Old Master paintings, sculptures, *objets d'art*, and assembled an extensive collection of rare porcelain. The gardens are classified by the French Ministry of Culture as one of the Notable Gardens of France.

On her death in 1934, the Baroness donated the property and its collections to the Académie des Beaux Arts division of the Institut de France and it is now open to the public.



Front view of the Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild

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The gardens

The villa is surrounded by nine gardens, each on a different theme: French, Spanish, Japanese, Florentine, Provençal, exotic, a stone garden, a rose garden, and a garden de Sèvres. They were created between 1905 and 1912 under the direction of landscape architect Achille Duchêne.

The garden was conceived in the form of a ship, to be viewed from the loggia of the house, which was like the bridge of a vessel, with the sea visible on all sides. It was inspired by a voyage she made on the liner *Île de France*, and the villa was given that name. The thirty gardeners who maintained the garden were dressed as sailors, with berets with red pom-poms.^[1]

The garden *à la française* is the largest and occupies the area behind the villa. Next to the villa there is a terrace with a formal French garden and topiaries. Beyond the terrace is a park with palm trees and a long basin, ornamented with fountains, statues, and basins with water lilies and other aquatic plants. On the far end



Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild, and gardens



Temple of Love

of the park is a hill covered with cypress trees, surrounding a replica garden of the Temple of Love at the Petit Trianon palace in Versailles. The slope below the temple has a cascade of water in the form of a stairway, which feeds into the large basin.

A stairway from the French garden descends to the circle of gardens on the lower level. The Spanish garden features a shaded courtyard and fountain, with aromatic plants, Catalan amphorae, and a Gallo-Roman bench. The Florentine garden, facing the rade of Villefranche-sur-Mer, has a grand stairway, an artificial grotto, and an *ephebe* of marble. Beyond the Florentine garden is the lapidary, or stone garden, with an

assortment of gargoyles, columns, and other architectural elements from ancient and medieval buildings. The Japanese garden has a wooden pavilion, a bridge, and lanterns. The exotic garden features giant cactus and other rare plants. A rose garden with a statue surrounded by columns adjoins it, where pink, the favorite color of the owner, is the predominant color. On the east side of the villa is a garden of native plants of Provence and a garden with decorations of Sèvres porcelain.

The villa was registered as a historical monument in 1996.^[2]

Events

Every year the Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild puts on *The Painters' Day* in June. The Villa opens its doors to the artists who want to find their inspiration and practise their art in one of the nine gardens of the site.^[3]

The villa is also the location of the annual summer opera festival Opera Azuriales.



The stone garden



The fountains and the Temple of Love



Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild and gardens



The Spanish garden



The formal garden

See also

- [Gardens of Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur](#)

References

1. Philippe Prévôt, Histoire des jardins, pg. 310; also on the Site of the Committee of Parks and Gardens of the French Ministry of Culture
2. La Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild dans la base Mérimée (http://www.culture.gouv.fr/public/mistral/merimee_fr?ACTION=CHERCHER&FIELD_1=REF&VALUE_1=PA00125706)
3. Villa Ephrussi Events (<http://villa-ephrussi.com/en/events/painters-day>) Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20140330215609/http://villa-ephrussi.com/en/events/painters-day>) March 30, 2014, at the [Wayback Machine](#)

External links

- [Official website of Villa Ephrussi](http://www.villa-ephrussi.com/en/ephrussi/215-/) (<http://www.villa-ephrussi.com/en/ephrussi/215-/>)
- [Photo collection of Villa Ephrussi](http://www.villa-ephrussi.com/en/ephrussi/609-photo_gallery/) (http://www.villa-ephrussi.com/en/ephrussi/609-photo_gallery/)

- *Opéra Les Azuriales* Festival website (<https://web.archive.org/web/20060508133534/http://www.w.azuriales-opera.com/index.htm>)
- In-depth article on the history of Villa Ephrussi (<http://www.bespokeyachtcharter.com/luxury-yacht-charter/villa-ephrussi-de-rothschild/>)

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